

Message Text

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TO AMEMBASSY CANBERRA PRIORITY

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EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, AS

SUBJECT: AUSTRALIAN AMBASSADOR DISCUSSES INDOCHINA
ISSUES

REF: CANBERRA 1636

1. AT HIS REQUEST, SIR PATRICK SHAW, AUSTRALIAN AMBASSADOR,
CALLED ON ASSISTANT SECRETARY HABIB MARCH 19 TO DISCUSS
INDOCHINA AND RELATED ISSUES.

2. SHAW STATED THAT, ALTHOUGH GOA REMAINS PREPARED
"IN DUE COURSE" TO PERMIT THE OPENING OF A "PRG INFORMATION
OFFICE ALONG THE LINES OF THOSE IN SCANDINAVIA," "THE
MODALITIES OF REACHING SUCH AN AGREEMENT WOULD BE BOTH
COMPLICATED AND PROTRACTED." HE VOLUNTEERED THAT THERE
WOULD BE "NO CHANCE OF ANY SUBSTANTIVE MOVE" IN THIS
REGARD BEFORE PM WHITLAM'S HOPED FOR CALL ON PRESIDENT
FORD ON MAY 7. HABIB ADDED THAT US WOULD HOPE FOR NO
MAJOR GOA PUBLIC STATEMENTS ON THAT ISSUE DURING THAT TIME
FRAME AND WENT ON TO EMPHASIZE THAT USG WELCOMED CLOSE
DIALOGUE WITH GOA AND OPPORTUNITY TO EXPLAIN SITUATION IN
INDOCHINA AS WE SEE IT.

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3. SHAW SAID HE HAD CALLED PRIMARILY TO GET CURRENT US THINKING ON INDOCHINA. HABIB SAID IT APPEARED THAT GOA LEADERSHIP WAS INTENT ON VIEWING SITUATION AS IF A MATTER OF LOCAL VC IN THE BUSH, TRYING TO CARRY OUT A SOCIAL REVOLUTION, WHEN WHAT WE HAD IN FACT WAS A MASSIVE MILITARY INTERVENTION ON THE PART OF NVN FORCES. HABIB EXPRESSED HOPE THAT WHITLAM AND OTHER TOP LEADERS WOULD MAKE THE EFFORT TO BECOME PROPERLY INFORMED OF THE FACTS, THAT THEY WOULD READ THE REPORTS THAT ARE AVAILABLE WITHIN THE GOA. HE THEN SURVEYED WHAT HE THOUGHT THE NVN OBJECTIVES WOULD BE DURING THE DRY SEASON CAMPAIGN AND OUTLINED THE MILITARY SITUATION IN CAMBODIA. HABIB STRESSED THAT CONTINUING US AID TO CAMBODIA WOULD INCREASE THE CHANCE FOR A STRUCTURED SOLUTION IN THE AREA THAT WOULD AVOID THE BRUTALITY OF A "MILITARY SOLUTION."

4. SHAW ASKED WHETHER CURRENT DEVELOPMENTS IN INDOCHINA WERE LIKELY TO AFFECT DETENTE OR THE IMPROVED US/PRC RELATIONSHIP. HABIB STATED THAT THE USG CONSIDERED THE GROSS VIOLATIONS OF THE PARIS AGREEMENTS BY NVN AS A REFLECTION OF THE MILITANCY AND OPPORTUNISM OF HANOI, WHICH UNDERSTOOD ONLY MILITARY POWER ON THE GROUND. OF COURSE, THE OTHER COMMUNIST NATIONS HAD CONTINUED TO SUPPLY HANOI AND TO PUBLICALLY ADVOCATE ITS CAUSE; THEY WERE NOT, HOWEVER, CALLING THE SHOTS.

5. HABIB STRESSED THE IMPLICATIONS OF WHAT WAS GOING ON IN INDOCHINA FOR AUSTRALIA. WHAT HAPPENED IN VIET-NAM WAS VERY IMPORTANT TO US POLICY, BOTH EXTERNALLY AND INTERNALLY. WHAT IS HAPPENING IN INDOCHINA IS ALREADY HAVING IMPLICATIONS FOR THAILAND AND THE PHILIPPINES; THERE WILL BE PRESSURES IN MALAYSIA; INDONESIA WILL BE WORRIED. ASIANS WILL SEE ANY WEAKING OF US SUPPORT LEVELS AS EVIDENCE OF A LACK OF WILL. A KIND OF "SEMI-ISOLATIONISM" IS ALSO APPEARING IN SOME US CIRCLES, AND OUR POLICY IN ASIA IS THE ONE AREA MOST LIKELY TO BE AFFECTED. ALL THIS SHOULD BE MOST IMPORTANT TO AUSTRALIA. INGERSOLL

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